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Measuring international labour mobility

Measuring international labour mobility

Note by the Task Force on measuring labour mobility

Summary

This document presents an extract of the report *Measuring international labour mobility* prepared by a task force with members representing Israel (Chair), Germany, Italy, Mexico, Norway, Turkey, International Labour Organization, International Organization for Migration, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, United Nations Statistics Division, World Trade Organization, and Goldsmiths University of London.

The current extract is prepared for translation purposes. It includes the report's introduction, the section on concepts of international labour mobility, overview of data availability, summary of case studies, conclusions and recommendations, and a description of issues for future work. The full version of the report, including four country case studies and a description of concepts of international migration and labour, is sent for electronic consultation among all members of the Conference of European Statisticians and is available at http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=47411.

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I. Introduction and background

1. Globalization expands and accelerates the movement of information, capital, goods, services and people across international borders. This applies in particular to common market areas such as the European Union with free movement of goods, capital, services and labour. As it has become easier to travel and take up work in other countries, international labour mobility has greatly increased and has become a topic of growing policy importance. Policymakers have an interest in understanding both the short-term and long-term effects of labour mobility. However, while there is an increased demand for statistics on labour mobility, producing comprehensive and comparable statistics on the topic remains challenging.

2. Because the measurement of international labour mobility touches upon economic, social and demographic domains, labour mobility is considered from different viewpoints, which separately cannot provide a full picture. For example, migration statistics cover migrants but not those who work in another country without changing place of residence. They also more often measure long-term migration than short-term migration, and do not always include the purpose of the move. Tourism statistics measure short-term moves only. Labour market statistics often lack information on mobility. The improvement of statistics on labour mobility thus requires coordination across several statistical domains and data collection systems, at both national and international levels.

3. Recognising the importance of improving statistics on international labour mobility, the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES)[1] reviewed this area in-depth in February 2015. The in-depth review identified three principal challenges facing producers of statistics on labour mobility: improving data comparability and coordination of work; enhancing accessibility of existing information; and filling data gaps (Statistics Austria, 2017).

4. Addressing the challenge of improving data comparability and coordination of work is necessary for several reasons. First, coordination between producers of labour, migration and tourism statistics within a country could help compilers of data on labour mobility to take advantage of the unique information produced in each domain. In addition, international harmonization of definitions and methodology for measuring labour mobility is important for assessing its overall global impact. Harmonization of concepts and improved data availability are required to answer to policy needs and to understand the changing economic realities surrounding labour mobility.

5. The second challenge of enhancing the accessibility of existing information should also be addressed. International organizations have taken important steps in aggregating data from different countries and making international comparisons. This challenge will also be met by countries themselves through better utilization of existing data sources and improved dissemination of these data.

6. Lastly, filling data gaps is another essential activity to be taken on by statisticians. These gaps can be filled through improvements in the collection of data through surveys,

[1] The Conference of European Statisticians is composed of national statistical organizations in the UNECE region (for UNECE member countries, see http://www.unece.org/oes/nutshell/member_states_representatives.html) and includes in addition Australia, Brazil, Chile, China, Colombia, Japan, Mexico, Mongolia, New Zealand and Republic of Korea. The major international organizations active in statistics in the UNECE region also participate in the work, such as the Statistical Office of the European Commission (Eurostat), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of the Independent States (CIS-STAT), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

administrative sources and improved data integration, though each come with unique challenges – including, but not restricted to, budgetary limitations. Data collection should be tailored to the specific requirements of measuring labour mobility as will be discussed in this guidance.

7. Based on the in-depth review, the CES Bureau established the Task Force on Measuring Labour Mobility in October 2015. The Task Force worked in conjunction with the concurrent International Labour Organization (ILO) Working Group on Labour Migration Statistics to minimize any possible contradictions and increase synergy between the two groups. While the ILO Working Group focuses on the concepts and definitions, the UNECE Task Force focused on countries' practices in the compilation of labour mobility statistics and the guidance that could be provided on this basis.

8. Members of the ILO Working Group and ILO staff have contributed to the present report. The ILO Working Group will prepare guidelines to be presented for adoption to the 20th International Conference of Labour Statisticians. These are expected to elaborate in greater detail the concepts and definitions related to labour migration and labour mobility.

9. The current document contains an extract of the report. It includes the report's introduction, the section on concepts of international labour mobility, overview of data availability, summary of case studies, conclusions and recommendations, and a description of issues for future work. The full version of the report, including four country case studies and a description of concepts of international migration and labour, is sent for electronic consultation among all members of the Conference of European Statisticians and is available on the UNECE web site at the following address: http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=47411.

II. Concepts[2]

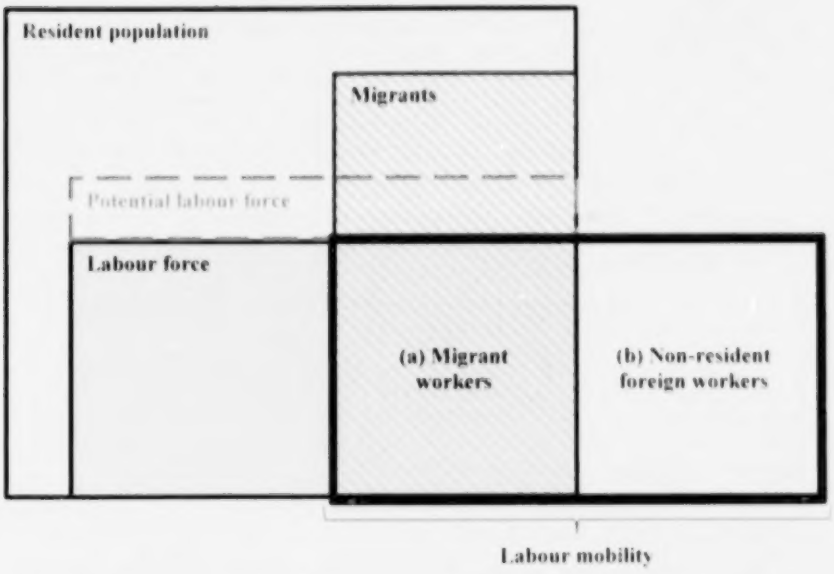
10. International labour mobility comprises all movements of natural persons from one country to another for the purpose of employment or supply of services.

11. Statistics on international labour mobility should rely on statistical frameworks in the areas closest to it, namely, international migration and labour. For information on the relevant concepts in these areas, the reader is referred to the full report that relies on the United Nations Recommendations on statistics of international migration (United Nations, 1998), the UNECE Handbook on the use of administrative sources and sample surveys to measure international migration (UNECE, 2016) and the ILO Resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization (International Labour Organization, 2013). The conceptual issues specific to international labour mobility are described below.

12. International labour mobility comprises all movements of natural persons from one country to another for the purpose of employment or supply of services.

[2] This section benefitted from the draft report "Towards improving statistical standards on international migrant workers" (International Labour Office, 2016) discussed at the 2nd meeting of the ILO Working Group on Labour Migration Statistics (Turin, 15–17 November 2016) and from the report on that meeting (International Labour Office, 2016).

Figure 1
Relation of the concepts of usually resident population, international migration, labour force and labour mobility



13. International labour mobility comprises all movements of natural persons from one country to another for the purpose of employment or supply of services.

14. Figure 1 provides a conceptual overview of the main population groups relevant to labour mobility and their relation with existing definitions of usual residence, migration and labour force. When looking at the population currently present in a country from the labour mobility perspective, the following two broad groups are of primary interest:

(a) "Migrant workers" who changed their place of usual residence from one country to another and are in the labour force of the destination country;

(b) "Non-resident foreign workers" who moved across borders for the purpose of employment or supply of services and who are not usual residents of the destination country.

15. The migrant workers may have arrived in the country for any reason. In measuring the in-flow of migrants, it is important to distinguish them by purpose of stay. This would allow identifying "for-work migrants", that is persons who arrived with a documented or declared intention of undertaking or seeking work at the time of entry into the destination country. While those who migrated for reasons other than work (e.g. as dependents, refugees or students) are not directly part of labour mobility at the time of their move, they may later contribute to the stock of migrant workers.

16. The following sections address the three main groups for the measurement of international labour mobility:

(a) Stock of international migrant workers;

(b) Non-resident foreign workers;

(c) Flow of migrants including for-work migrants.

A. Stock of international migrant workers

17. In order to define the stock of international migrant workers, it is necessary to put together the concepts of "international migrant" and "worker".

18. Regarding the aspect of work, the main issue is whether to apply the concept of "work" or "being in the labour force". Work is defined as "any activity performed by persons of any sex and age to produce goods or provide services for use by others or for own use" whereas labour force comprises the employed, that is, persons working for pay or profit, and the unemployed. It is pertinent to refer to the belonging to the labour force and define an "international migrant worker" as an "international migrant who is in the labour force of the country of which he/she is now a usual resident".

19. According to this definition, international migrant workers do not include people engaged in other forms of work than employment, such as own-use production, unpaid trainee work and volunteer work.

20. The migrant status and work status are defined in relation to the current moment. They are not related to the reasons for migration.

21. Some international migrants are not allowed to work for pay or profit. Others may be subject to restrictions limiting the type and/or location of the work they can undertake. At the same time, many of the international migrants who are subject to employment restrictions may want to work and in fact do so informally. On these grounds, the following two categories are included in the potential labour force:

(a) Those seeking but not available for employment because of restrictions related to their status as international migrant;

(b) Those available for but not seeking employment because of restrictions related to their status as international migrant.

B. Non-resident foreign workers (residents working abroad)

1. Overview

22. An important group of interest in labour mobility are those who engage in economic activity in the country concerned without changing their country of usual residence. From the perspective of the country where they work, they are "non-resident foreign workers"; from the perspective of their country of usual residence, they are "residents working abroad".

23. This group includes cross-border workers, non-resident service suppliers, seasonal workers, business travellers who receive remuneration from the country of origin, posted workers and others. Non-resident service suppliers, posted workers and business travellers are considered non-resident foreign workers if they stay in their country of destination for less than 12 months. Cross-border workers, seasonal workers and others are considered as non-resident foreign workers if they stay in the receiving country less than 3 months. If they stay at least three months, they are considered short-term migrants with usual residence in the country of destination.

24. Non-resident foreign workers could also include those who commute across borders to work without a formal permission to work in that country.

25. Information on both citizens and foreigners working under these arrangements are of interest when measuring labour mobility.

26. *Knowing* how many people are moving in the context of short term employment contracts or are providing services abroad (flows, stocks, as well as the number of associated trips) is very important for analysis of labour mobility. Given the interest that

labour mobility (migrant/non-migrant, employment/postings, short-term/long-term movements) generates amongst officials and research institutions involved in migration/labour/trade in services issues, these data would provide a useful gauge about the relative importance of such movements within wider economic international mobility.

27. An important criterion for distinguishing between different categories of people who arrive is whether the destination country considers the worker as an actual or potential usual resident. This is normally reflected in the type of legal residence status a worker is granted and often is implicit in the migration type. Seasonal workers, posted workers, cross-border workers, project workers and other such categories have limited rights and are not expected to change their usual place of residence. However, in some cases their status may change or lead to a continuous stay for more than a year, in which case they would be considered in the stock of international migrants.

28. As indicated in the in-depth review of labour mobility and globalization (Statistics Austria, 2017), in principle there is no need to create a new statistical framework, but rather build upon existing ones by defining a clear taxonomy of categories as outlined above and adjust for eventual gaps as necessary.

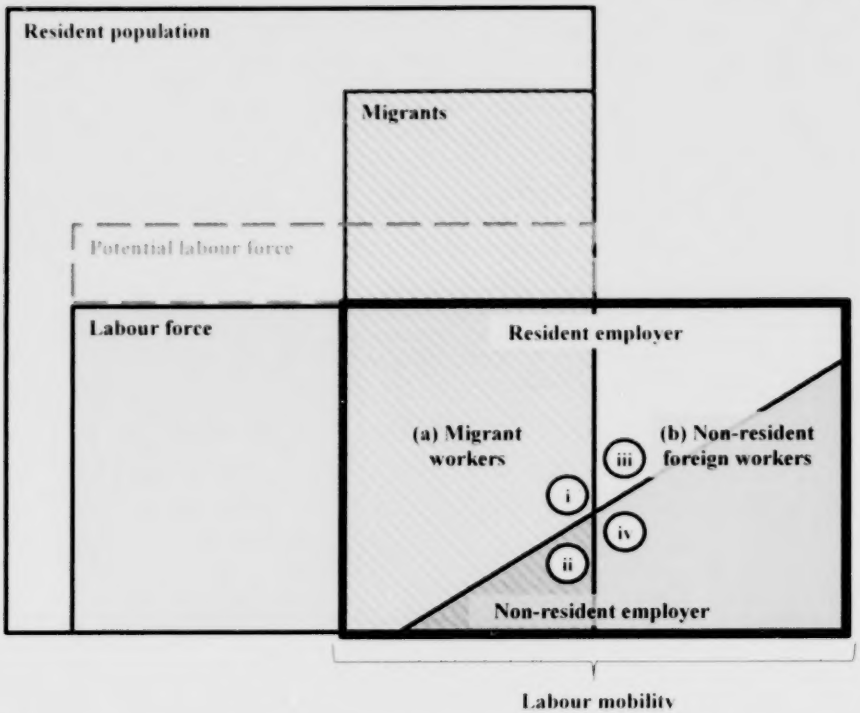
29. Statistical frameworks on migration and labour are more developed than those on labour mobility.[3] Concepts of service suppliers and people engaged in short-term employment in other countries, have only received attention in the context of statistical recommendations on trade in services.

[3] See work of ILO, OECD, Eurostat, IOM, UNECE, UNPD, UNDESA.

2. Taxonomy[4]

Figure 2

Groups of labour mobility in relation to the usually resident population and residence of employer



30. This section deals with non-resident foreign workers who are engaged in short term employment in the economy visited, regularly commute to another economy for employment (whether short or long term), or provide services based on a "service contract" and subsequently return to their home country. All these categories involve movement of persons across borders. Within the European Union (EU), the latter can commonly be referred to as "posting of workers" or "short-term assignments".[5] In the terminology of the General Agreement on Trade in Services ((GATS: General Agreement on Trade in Services, 1994) article I), paragraph 2, lit d) both these categories together are labelled as "mode 4" or "presence of natural persons". Harmonised statistics on this matter are scarce and it is therefore of utmost importance to address this phenomenon.

[4] This section is based on the in-depth review prepared by Statistics Austria for the Bureau of the Conference of European Statisticians (Statistics Austria, 2017), as well as chapter V of the Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services 2010 (MSITS 2010) (United Nations, 2010) and chapter 16 of the MSITS 2010 Compiler's Guide (United Nations, 2014).

[5] The complexity of this phenomenon is well described by the fact that researchers have identified 12 more or less synonymous terms used in literature and they came up with a typology referring to 18 dimensions with more than 45 different categories of short-term assignments (Green, Baldauf, & Owen, 2009).

31. Figure 2 provides a conceptual overview of the scope of labour mobility and its relation with existing definitions of usual residence, migration and labour force. The triangle shape in the figure highlights labour mobility involving non-resident service suppliers. This cuts across the definition of usual residence established in population statistics as it relates to persons who are temporarily posted to a workplace abroad, such as consultants, temporary agency workers or self-employed service providers. Even if such an arrangement will typically be short-term, GATS does not imply any particular duration of stay. Although mode 4 implies international mobility of workers, the Annex on Movement of Natural Persons in GATS determines, "The Agreement shall not apply to measures affecting natural persons seeking access to the employment market of a Member, nor shall it apply to measures regarding citizenship, residence or employment on a permanent basis."

32. The residence of employers as defined in the Balance of Payments Manual 6th edition (BPM6) uses the criterion of one year. In that context, residence of institutional units is defined as follows:

"The residence of each institutional unit is the economic territory with which it has the strongest connection, expressed as its centre of predominant economic interest. [...] An institutional unit is resident in an economic territory when there exists, within the economic territory, some location, dwelling, place of production, or other premises on which or from which the unit engages and intends to continue engaging, either indefinitely or over a finite but long period of time, in economic activities and transactions on a significant scale. The location need not be fixed so long as it remains within the economic territory. Actual or intended location for one year or more is used as an operational definition; while the choice of one year as a specific period is somewhat arbitrary, it is adopted to avoid uncertainty and facilitate international consistency. [...] A household is resident in the economic territory in which household members maintain or intend to maintain a dwelling or succession of dwellings treated and used by members of the household as their principal dwelling. Being present for one year or more in a territory or intending to do so is sufficient to qualify as having a principal dwelling there. [...] As a general principle, an enterprise is resident in an economic territory when the enterprise is engaged in a significant amount of production of goods and or services from a location in the territory."

33. BPM6 Chapter 4 and MSITS 2010 Chapter 3 provide more information on residence of employers. In the present guidance, residence of foreign workers refers to usual residence (more than 12 months for long-term migrant workers and more than 3 and less than 12 for short-term migrant workers) whereas residence of institutional units/ employers refers to the concept of "predominant centre of economic interest" where one year is used as the criterion.

34. The combination of usual residence of persons with the residence of employers or place of employment yields four groups (i-iv in Figure 2):

(a) Migrant workers whose employment relation is with:

(i) A resident entity in the host country:

1. Long-term migrant workers, including self-employed persons: stay of at least 12 months;

2. Short-term migrant workers: stay between 3 to 12 months;

(ii) With a non-resident entity: stay of at least 12 months (e.g. long-term posting);

(b) Non-resident foreign workers whose employment relation is:

(iii) With a resident entity: stay of less than 3 months (e.g. seasonal or frontier workers);

(iv) With a non-resident entity or self-employed persons: stay of less than 12 months (e.g. short-term posting).

35. National accounts count the labour input of foreigners who work for resident producer units (groups i and iii in Figure 2) as contribution to the domestic value added. Balance of payment statistics distinguish the same groups by determining whether the work is based on an employment or a service contract. The latter is characterised by payments for a specific result without control over the method of work whereas employment relations imply remuneration for working time including control over the method of work. The Guide on the Impact of Globalization on National Accounts ((UNECE, 2011), paragraph 10.32) considers the definitions in the 2008 System of National Accounts (SNA) and the Balance of Payments Manual Sixth Edition (BPM6) (International Monetary Fund, 2009) as consistent with population statistics.

36. The Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services 2010 (MSITS 2010) ((United Nations, 2010), paragraph 2.79) integrates the United Nations Recommendations on statistics of international migration, SNA 2008 and BPM6 as well as the definition of business travellers in the International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics (IRTS) (United Nations, 2008). The integrated classification is presented in Section C.2 of the Manual.

37. The MSITS breaks mode 4 down into 3 main categories for compilation of data:

(a) Contractual service suppliers, whether employees of a foreign service supplier (ii and iv) or self-employed (iv) and (i.1);

(b) Intra corporate transferees who initially work for a non-resident service supplier who has established a commercial presence, and are sent to work in the commercial presence. For simplification purposes it is assumed in this guidance that for short-term transfers (i.e. less than 3 months) the employment relationship remains with the non-resident supplier (sub-category of iv), for longer-term transfers (i.e. 3 months or more) it is with the receiving entity (sub-categories of i.1 and i.2)[6];

(c) Service sellers/persons responsible for setting up a commercial presence (part of group iv).

38. The following categories are of primary interest:

(a) Short-term migrant workers (i.2)[7] and non-resident foreign workers (iii) whose employment relationship is with a resident entity;

(b) Non-resident foreign workers whose employment relation is with a non-resident entity or who are self-employed (iv).

39. As foreseen above, an important factor to distinguish between categories (a) and (b) is where the employment relationship stands, or how to determine if a person is self-employed, providing services on behalf of his employer in the destination country, or in an employer-employee relationship in the host country. The *Guide on the impact of globalization on national accounts* details how important this distinction is in terms of impact on national accounts and productivity measurement ((UNECE, 2011) box 10.1).

[6] MSITS 2010 also includes foreign employees directly recruited by foreign established companies although admitting that these may also be considered as migrants.

[7] This category is mentioned here to complement stays of less than 3 months for employment purposes. It is not covered by the definition of non-resident foreign workers, as according to United Nations Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, it is assumed that their place of usual residence changes for the period they stay in the destination country.

3. Linking the taxonomy to existing statistical frameworks

40. As stated in the *Guide on the impact of globalization on national accounts*, "the definitions and recommendations in the various statistical frameworks seem sufficiently harmonized to ensure that the population and labour statistics collected according to UN/ILO frameworks may be used in the national accounts and balance of payments without adjustments." In other words, the United Nations Recommendations on statistics of international migration (United Nations, 1998) and the ILO Resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization (International Labour Organization, 2013) are sufficient to cover the needs identified.

41. Other statistical frameworks are of particular interest here: the International Recommendations for Tourism Statistics 2008 (IRTS) and the Tourism Satellite Accounts: Recommended Methodological Framework 2008 (TSA-RMF) (United Nations, 2008). This section presents how these frameworks could be used and extended in order to develop relevant additional indicators on labour mobility for non-resident foreign workers.

42. IRTS is a comprehensive methodological framework for the collection and compilation of tourism statistics. This conceptual framework defines tourism and refers to related concepts such as country of residence, place of usual residence and usual environment. It introduces the activity of visitors from the point of view of their expenditure and presents the standard classification of products and productive activities that need to be used to conduct a comparable analysis of the demand and supply related to tourism. An extension of IRTS is the tourism satellite account, by which tourism statistics are linked with the mainstream of macroeconomic analysis (see TSA-RMF).

43. IRTS identifies international visitors as non-residents travelling in the country of reference, or residents travelling outside of it, being on a tourism trip. They must not be in an employer-employee relationship with an entity resident in the country visited and receive compensation for the labour input provided. This framework proposes to breakdown trips according to their main purpose, i.e. personal (holidays, leisure and recreation, education and training, health and medical care, etc.) and business and professional purposes.

44. The flows of visitors whose main purpose of trip is business and professional includes the activities of the self-employed and employees, as long as they do not correspond to an employer-employee relationship with a resident producer in the country visited, as well as those of investors, businessmen, or any other type of professional purposes. Although IRTS recognizes that for some countries, it may be difficult to distinguish between business and professional trips, it suggests that for some others it may be sufficiently important to disaggregate this information further. We will outline below how this framework could be used to derive relevant information on non-resident foreign workers whose employment relation is with a non-resident enterprise or who are self-employed.

45. As indicated above, the IRTS category "business and professional purposes" of trip is a particularly interesting category to analyse. For this, the category can be disaggregated into non-resident foreign workers whose employment relation is with a non-resident enterprise (stay of less than 12 months, e.g. short-term posting) and self-employed. Those correspond to contractual service suppliers (of which self-employed and employees). However, statistics resulting from this framework will not cover cases where there is a change of usual residence from one country to another and employment-related movements of less than three months (employer-employee relationship with a producer resident in the host economy).

4. Data sources

46. The potential data sources for statistics on non-resident foreign workers are enterprise surveys, administrative sources, household and labour-force surveys, population

censuses and border or passenger surveys. There are no dedicated and comprehensive data sources for such movements and stays, which means that compilers should select and when possible combine the following sources:

(a) Administrative sources, such as population registers, migration records, work permits, social security and employment documents. They are more pertinent in countries of destination. Entry and exit cards could be used as a sample frame for border/passenger surveys;

(b) Border/passenger surveys should be considered for obtaining characteristics of those traveling for business, work or employment purposes, combined with counts of border crossings;

(c) Household/labour-force surveys could help to obtain information for outgoing persons, in particular the self-employed, and if relevant combining this information also with counts of outgoing persons/trips;

(d) Enterprise surveys:

(i) Trade in services surveys would probably be the best source to collect data on non-resident foreign workers whose employment relation is with a non-resident enterprise, i.e. alongside the data on the value of the contracts;

(ii) Foreign affiliates statistics (FATS) data sources could be useful on intra-firm movements or direct recruitments by foreign affiliates;

(iii) Other enterprise surveys, covering specific services sectors, or temporary employment agencies could also be specially tailored to capture information of interest;

(e) Business registers may contain information needed to identify potential self-employed service suppliers.

47. Partner country data may provide useful information given that it may be difficult or impossible to collect details on characteristics of incoming persons or trips through surveys of enterprises or households, or using administrative records for outgoing persons. As a consequence, partner country information could turn out to be essential and be used/compared using a clearing house for such data. This implies that the data collection and quality of the compiling country depends on partners' willingness and capacity to collect and provide quality data, as this normally involves coordination, cost and in the case of international negotiations also certain interests, a central brokering institution may be important. Compilers therefore need to be cautious in using partner country data (definitions, national laws/regulations in place may differ, etc.).

C. Flow of migrants including for-work migrants

48. The flow of international migrants is the number of migrants entering or leaving a country over the course of a specific period, normally taken as one year. In the context of international labour mobility, the interest is in the flow of for-work migrants and their share all international migrants.

49. In the case of out-flow of workers and in-flow of foreign migrant workers, the concept is not that of currently participating in the labour force, but that of the documented or stated objective or intention of such participation in the future. In the case of return flow of citizens, the reference is not to current participation, but to participation in the past, in another country.

50. "For-work migrants" enter a country with the documented or stated objective of seeking or undertaking employment. Seeking or undertaking employment does not have to

be the only reason for the entry, nor even the main reason – it suffices for it to be just one of the reasons if there are several reasons for the migration. To measure this group, the reasons for the move have to be recorded and tabulated in the way that allows to identify whether seeking or undertaking employment was one of the documented or stated reasons for the entry.

51. In most situations, better data can be collected in the destination country on the in-flow than in the country of origin on the out-flow. Furthermore, the data sources are geared towards identifying the in-flow foreigners and less so of the in-flow (return) of citizens.

52. The reason or motive for the migration (including the intention to undertake employment) may also remain undocumented and undeclared. This may result from several factors. Firstly, the omission may be intentional, such as in the case of a person entering on a tourist or study visa but then staying on to seek or undertake work. Secondly, the intention may be overshadowed by some more powerful and immediate reason for the migration, as in the case of a person entering the country as a refugee or asylum seeker; many such persons have to seek employment, but that can hardly be the stated reason for their move. Thirdly, there may be no opportunity to state the reason for entry, as in the case of undocumented or irregular migrants. Fourthly, the same reason as above would apply also to migrants whose entry is not subject to controls.

53. From the perspective of linking the information on the flow to the stock of international migrant workers, it is to be noted that for-work migrants may or may not actually undertake work or continue to work and migrants entering with other objectives may or may not actually remain outside the labour force.

III. Overview of data availability

A. Sources

54. This chapter is concerned with empirical information on the current situation concerning data availability on international labour mobility in different countries. It addresses issues concerning data availability on the three main measurements relevant to labour mobility: (i) stock of international migrants and migrant workers, (ii) non-resident foreign workers and (iii) in-flow of migrants including for-work migrants, as defined in section II of this guidance.

55. The measurement of labour mobility touches upon various statistical domains using a variety of sources. In order to identify good practices, ILO prepared a set of questionnaires requesting information on the availability of statistics on the migration of workers to and from each country, and the sources and methods used in compiling such statistics.[8] In this chapter, we examine and draw implications from a broad analysis of the results of ILO questionnaires concerning data availability on the three main measurements of interest in labour mobility identified above. For the present purpose, the most useful indicators from the ILO survey analysed here concern the type of information that is available in different countries from different national data sources.[9]

[8] In 2015 the ILO circulated a series of methodological questionnaires on International Labour Migration Statistics as part of the Working Group on Migrant Workers. In July 2016 the ILO shared the data collected in the questionnaires with the UNECE Task Force on Measuring Labour Mobility, and the research on the questionnaire was presented at the second meeting of the Working Group on the Labour Migration Statistics, Turin, Italy, 15–17 November 2016.

[9] ILO plans to publish more detailed results from the enquiry in a separate publication.

B. ILO methodological questionnaires on international labour migration statistics

56. ILO circulated seven types of questionnaires (see Table 1). The questionnaires were sent to the national statistical offices (NSOs) of all ILO member States, with the request that each relevant questionnaire be completed by the appropriate unit of the NSO and/or the ministry or agency responsible for a particular data source. Depending on the data sources available, the same questionnaire could require response by more than one government ministry or agency. Not all countries answered all questionnaires and some countries responded more than once to a particular type of questionnaire (e.g. providing information on more than one household survey). Of the 190 countries[10] originally contacted, 128 countries returned at least one questionnaire, giving a total of 480 questionnaires.[11]

Table 1
Numbers of responding countries and questionnaires received

	Total		*Europe and Central Asia*	
Questionnaire	*Types of questionnaires received*	*Number of responding countries*	*Types of questionnaires received*	*Number of responding countries*
Q1 Population Census	122	122	48	48
Q2 Household Surveys	120	86	68	42
Q3 Border/Admission Statistics	49	48	20	19
Q4 Establishment Census	18	18	4	4
Q5 Establishment Surveys	18	16	10	8
Q6 Administrative Sources	126	72	89	40
Q7 Estimation of International Migrant Workers	27	26	11	10
All questionnaires /Countries	**480**	**128**	**250**	**50**

57. As we can see in Table 1, most questionnaires were answered once by each country. Only Household Surveys (Q2) and Administrative Sources (Q6) have significant differences between the number of questionnaires received and number of responding countries. For the purpose of analysis, the country questionnaires were consolidated in the following data sources (S1-S10). Each source is unique, in that at most only one of it is present in a country, irrespective of the number of questionnaires types it is based on.

[10] The term "country" is used in a general sense to indicate a country, territory or other relevant administrative unit suitable for the ILO data collection.

[11] Of the 190 countries and territories approached, 67 per cent responded, accounting for 70 per cent of the world population. The proportion of countries responding reaches 90 per cent in Europe and Central Asia, but remains below 50 per cent in the Americas and Arab State regions. However, in terms of the proportion of the population covered, Americas have one of the highest figures (84 per cent, USA is included, though not Brazil), while it is the lowest for Arab States (30 per cent). Overall, the ILO country survey has achieved very respectable response rates. The achieved level of response is actually better than the above figures indicate, given that the subject matter of the enquiry is information on *international migrant workers*, to which the contribution of China is much smaller than indicated by the size of its total population.

(S1) Population census (same as Q1)

(S2) All household surveys, including Labour Force Survey (LFS) (consolidation of all questionnaires of type Q2 returned by the country into a single source, S2)

(S3) Population and social security registers, other administrative sources (consolidation of all questionnaires in a subset of Q6 into a single source)

(S4) Establishment census and surveys (consolidation if Q4 and also questionnaire(s) in Q5 returned by the country into a single source, S4)

(S5) Private and public employment services (consolidation of all questionnaires in a subset of Q6 into a single source, S5)

(S6) Registers of international migrants, migrant workers, work permits issued (consolidation of all questionnaires in a subset of Q6 into a single source, S6)

(S7) Border/admission statistical sources (consolidation of all questionnaires of type Q3 into a single source)

(S8) Register of nationals issued work permit for abroad (consolidation of all questionnaires in a subset of Q6 into a single source)

(S9) LFS (the LFS questionnaire returned using Q2)

(S10) Questionnaire on the Estimation of International Migrant Workers in the Country (consolidation of all questionnaires of type Q7 returned by the country)

C. Availability of data sources on international labour migration and mobility from ILO survey

Table 2
Number of countries reporting a source, as percentage of all responding countries in a region

	Any (no.)	S1	S2	S1 & or S2	S3	S6	S3 & or S6	S4	S5	S4 & or S5	S7	S8	S9	Other
Africa	31	100	65	100	13	19	32	32	13	45	45	3	29	100
Americas	15	73	60	100	27	7	33	7	0	7	33	7	40	100
Arab States	5	100	100	100	40	0	40	40	0	40	20	0	80	100
Asia & the Pacific	19	100	32	100	5	21	26	11	11	16	37	5	11	100
Europe & Central Asia	44	95	91	100	55	39	73	18	23	34	41	5	77	100
Other small territories	14	100	43	100	43	29	64	14	7	21	21	0	29	100
Percentage of respondents	100	95	67	100	32	25	49	20	13	30	38	4	46	20

58. A number of pertinent observations on the pattern emerging from Table 2 follow.

1. Population census and household surveys

59. Population census and household surveys are the most widely available sources of data on international labour migration. All responding countries report at least one of these two data sources, with 122 (95 per cent) reporting a population census with relevant information, and 86 (67 per cent) reporting at least one household survey, including 81 (63 per cent) reporting the availability of sources of both types. The main merits of census as a source are that (i) the census can provide information on small domains (small areas and

small populations) because of its large size; and (ii) its coverage of the resident population tends to be more complete than that in typical sample surveys. The main merits of sample surveys arise from (i) their higher frequency (hence timeliness), and (ii) greater flexibility and richness of content.

60. Among household surveys, the labour-force survey (LFS) is the most common source (at 43 per cent), followed by income, expenditure or living conditions surveys (26 per cent).[12] This scenario has important practical implications.

61. In almost all cases, population census and/or surveys obtain information on basic demographic characteristics (age, sex, marital status) along with individual's employment status. A clear majority cover 95 per cent or more of the country's population, though under one-half (47 per cent) report covering refugees and asylum seekers. Information on country of birth and/or on the country of citizenship along with information on the person's employment status is available in a clear majority (90 per cent) of the countries, making it possible to identify international migrant workers in the population. In addition, over half (55 per cent) the countries report information on whether the individual has ever lived abroad.

62. Nearly half (47 per cent) report that the source(s) cover refugees apart from other non-citizens.

63. Nearly 75 per cent of the countries report information on country of citizenship, and 85 per cent on country of birth. Information on employment status is available in practically all countries. Information on country of birth and/or on the country of citizenship is available along with information on the person's employment status in clear majority (90 per cent) of the countries. Among these, in 65 per cent all the three items of information are available together in the same source: such information makes it possible to identify international migrant workers in the population. A similar picture pertains in relation to information on the migrant's previous country of residence and on duration since last entry (in-migration).

64. A majority (60 per cent) obtain some information on former household members who have moved out to live abroad for intended or actual duration exceeding a certain specified threshold.

65. One-third of the countries (34 per cent) report some information on remittances sent and/or received by international migrants. Most of these record remittances received by migrants from abroad, and only half of these record remittances sent back.

2. Population-based registers

66. Population-based registers containing information concerning international labour migration – which include general population and social security registers and other similar administrative sources, as well as registers of international migrants and of migrant workers, and work permits issued – are the second important source of information. One-half of the responding countries report the availability of at least one such source. The type of information on international migrant workers contained is of similar scope and type to that contained in population censuses and surveys. However, the availability of this type of source is quite different across regions: three-quarter of countries in Europe and Central Asia but only one-quarter in Asia and the Pacific report population-based registers containing information on international labour migration. Registers of international

[12] The 2014 EU-LFS had an ad hoc module on "Labour market situation of migrants and their immediate descendants" with 25 countries participating
http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/EU_labour_force_survey_-_ad_hoc_modules

migrants and of migrant workers, and work permits issued (S6) are also most prevalent in Europe and Central Asia (39 per cent), but otherwise the pattern is complementary (opposite) to the above for general population and social security registers.

67. These sources containing information on international labour migration include general population and social security registers and other similar administrative sources, registers of international migrants and of migrant workers, and records of work permits issued. Information on employment status along with on basic demographic characteristics is available in one-in-five (19 per cent) countries. The remaining countries report the availability of basic demographic characteristics only, without information on individuals' employment status. Whether the person has ever lived abroad is recorded in 35 per cent of the countries, i.e. in nearly three-quarters of the countries reporting the presence of the data source. Refugees and asylum seekers are included in less than half of the countries reporting the presence of the data source.

3. Establishment surveys

68. Even though the two sources are very different in terms of statistical methodology as well as the content, generally countries tend to report only one or the other of the two, either establishment surveys or employment services. Only a few countries in Europe and Central Asia report having both types of sources.

69. Establishment census and surveys (S4) with relevant information concerning international labour migration are reported by one-in-five (25/128) of the responding countries. Generally, the scope and content of the information relevant for international labour migration in sources of this type tends to be limited. For instance, one-half of the available establishment census and surveys do not cover the informal sector, and a similar proportion applies to the coverage of major economic sectors; only one-in-five of the available census and surveys cover establishments of all sector and sizes. Similarly, while the coverage of employment services, where they exist, is generally national, fewer than one-in-four state that refugees and asylum seekers are covered. In either type of source, only a minority (one-in-four overall) include information on employment status and country or citizenship or birth – which are among the basic variables required for the identification of international migrant workers. Practically no information is recorded on the migrant's duration since arrival into the country. Similarly, practically no information is reported on remittances sent or received by migrant workers.

4. Employment services

70. Private and public employment services (S5) are reported less frequently (by 13 per cent of the responding countries). They are most common in Europe and Central Asia (23 per cent) but practically absent in Americas and Arab States. Employment status along with information on country of birth and/or country of citizenship – needed for identifying migrant workers – is reported by 6 per cent only (8/128) responding countries. A similar proportion report availability of information on former household members who have moved abroad. Very few contain information on whether the person has ever lived abroad, and none report information on country of previous residence.

5. Border/admission statistics

71. These sources (S7) cover information from the country's border/admission statistics obtained from immigration/emigration forms at the borders and other points of entry and exit from the country. In contrast to the sources listed above which, by and large, concern migration stocks, border/admission statistics (obtained from immigration/emigration forms at the borders and other points of entry and exit from the country) constitute a major source of information on migratory flows in both directions. Border statistics constitute a major source of information, being available in a little under 40 per cent of the countries responding to the ILO survey; furthermore, a third of all responding countries report that

such statistics are maintained on a continuous basis. Generally, they cover all ages and contain information on sex and age of the individuals.

72. It is highly relevant to note that over 80 per cent of the exiting border/admission records cover special categories of migrants, including irregular and transient migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. On the other hand, only one in four among those contain information on employment status along with information on country of citizenship or birth and last country of residence – items necessary for the identification of international migrant workers.

73. Over half of the countries with border/admission records also report the coverage of nationals going to live abroad. In half of the cases, information concerning reason for departure, intended duration of stay abroad, as well as on destination country is collected.

6. Register of nationals issued permits for work abroad

74. Register of nationals who have been issued permits for work abroad (S8) are reported by very few counties, only 5 among the 128 responding countries (4 per cent). The country of destination is reported by 3 per cent (4 cases). The implication is that *available information on both flows and stocks of workers migrating abroad is very limited in most countries*. Partial information is available from population censuses and household surveys: a majority (60 per cent) of these obtain some information on former household members who have moved out to live abroad for intended or actual duration exceeding a certain specified threshold; one-in-three also report some information on remittances sent and/or received by international migrants. However, such information on out-migrating workers is likely to be seriously underreported.

7. ILO module on migration

75. ILO has developed a labour migration module, which can be added to existing household surveys, in particular to LFSs in countries of origin and countries of destination. The module was piloted in 2006–2007 in four countries (Armenia, Ecuador, Egypt and Thailand) and then implemented as part of the LFS in Ukraine and Moldova in 2012. The module provides a rich source of data including social and economic characteristics of migrant workers. The survey covers: the scale, scope and pattern of distribution of labour migration; socio-demographic composition of migrant workers (including educational attainment and training before departure abroad); and frequency, duration, economic activities and working conditions of migratory trips.

76. The Labour Force Migration Survey (LFMS) was conducted in the Republic of Moldova in the last quarter of 2012 in order to assess the extent of labour migration out of the country and to describe the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of migrant workers. Administered as a module of the regularly conducted Labour Force Survey (LFS), the LFMS was developed and implemented by the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova.

77. Conducted in the fourth quarter of 2012 as a module of the regularly administered LFS, the LFMS had a target population of individuals aged from 15 to 64 years who had (i) either left the country to work or look for work abroad within 24 months preceding the date of the survey or (ii) who intended to leave the country to work or look for work within six months following the survey. The survey used three separate questionnaires to gather information on migrant workers: (i) a questionnaire to collect information on household members living abroad; (ii) a questionnaire on household members who had not been abroad in the previous 24 months and who intended to migrate within six months following the survey date; and (iii) a questionnaire on household members who had been abroad in the previous 24 months and had returned and were residing in Moldova at the time of the survey.

78. Similarly, in 2012 the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, in collaboration with ILO, conducted the Survey on Labour Migration (SLM) in order to estimate the size of labour migration out of Ukraine and analyse the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of migrant workers.

IV. Country case studies

A. Structure

79. Four countries volunteered to prepare country case studies for the Task Force: Israel, Italy, Mexico and Norway. The Task Force established a common framework for the case studies, aligned with the main measurements relevant to international labour mobility (section II):

(a) Stock of international migrant workers with externally displaced persons as a sub-category;

(b) Non-resident foreign workers and residents working abroad;

(c) In-flow of migrants including for-work migrants.

80. The goal of the case studies was to collect and present current practices on the collection of data and preparation of statistics in these areas. They describe the availability of data for these measurements in each country, characterize the most important data sources as well as present a brief analysis of the effect of labour mobility on the local economy and labour force.

81. Each country compiled data tables according to the template specified in the framework as far as data was available. The data is the basis for the discussion on availability and the analysis presented in the below chapter. Full data tables will be made available at the UNECE website.

82. The full version of the report contains four country case studies from Israel, Italy, Mexico, and Norway.

B. Summary of data sources

83. The four case studies describe widely different contexts of international labour mobility and its data sources. The sources include household surveys, border surveys, population censuses as well as administrative data from entrance permits, residence permits, population registers, social security registers and employment registers.

84. For measuring migrant workers, non-resident foreign workers and residents working abroad, Israel, Italy and Mexico rely on surveys (Table 3). In Norway, registers provide the main characteristics of all groups except residents working abroad, whereas LFS provides additional variables of all groups except non-resident foreign workers. To measure the in-flow of migrants including for-work migrants, all four countries mainly rely on administrative sources.

Table 3
Data sources in Israel, Italy, Mexico and Norway

Group	*Israel*	*Italy*	*Mexico*	*Norway*
Migrant workers	LFS	LFS	1. Intercensal survey; 2. Survey on Demographic Dynamics	Registers; LFS
Externally displaced persons	1: Population and Immigration Authority; 2: LFS	Residence permits	1. Survey on Demographic Dynamics; 2. Commission for Refugee Assistance	Registers; LFS
Non-resident foreign workers	Palestinian LFS	EU-LFS	Survey of Migration on the South Border	Registers
Residents working abroad	LFS	LFS; census	1. Intercensal survey; 2. Survey on Income & Expenditure; 3. Survey of Occupation and Employment	LFS; Swedish registers
In-flow of migrants including for-work migrants	Population and Immigration Authority	Residence permits; municipality registers	1. National Institute of Migration; 2. Survey on Demographic Dynamics	Registers; (LFS)

Notes: Cells representing administrative sources are highlighted. Numbers refer to a source of primary, secondary or tertiary importance, respectively.

85. The studies also reveal the potential of using data from other countries and territories. To measure non-resident foreign workers, Israel uses Palestinian LFS and Italy proposes to examine the possibility of using LFS from other EU countries. Norway uses Swedish register data for statistics on their residents working in Sweden. None of the countries provide for a complete coverage of non-resident foreign workers and residents working abroad.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions

86. The diversity of data sources presents many options but also many limitations when comparing data between countries. From that perspective, the following points need to be considered:

(a) Length of stay – periods used in definitions should be taken into account when making comparisons e.g. the number of months of residence to be included in a group and/or the intended length of stay versus the actual length of stay;

(b) Regular and irregular migrant workers – use of registers and administrative data are a large part of data collection – particularly for coverage of recently arrived migrants. These data may not take into account irregular migrants who may have bypassed border crossings and/or work permits. Surveys and censuses may better cover this population although population definitions must be considered here too;

(c) National needs – countries have various needs and are under different regional agreements that affect the population that they are interested in monitoring – at borders and places of work. These differences may affect current and future data collection. Care must be taken to allow fulfilment of national and international reporting needs as well as those arising for information on migration, labour or trade in services;

(d) Age – countries have different upper and lower age limits regarding participation in the labour force.

87. Change in place of usual residence is key in defining migrants, including for-work migrants. Whether a change in place of usual residence occurs, depends on a change in location and the actual or intended length of stay. As the case studies show, countries collect and use the variables country of birth and/or country of citizenship in addition to time of entry to identify migrants and migrant workers. This is in line with the United Nations Recommendations and very useful for one-time and long-term migrants.

88. Additional data on entries and exits are needed to capture the dynamics of non-resident foreign workers and residents working abroad. Separate identification of recurring entries/exits is needed to collect information on frontier or seasonal workers. Information on type of entry permit and length of stay permitted can be useful for dealing with posted workers or non-resident service suppliers if they allow their separate identification.

89. Particular attention must be paid to the place of work and type of work. Migrants often participate in the labour force differently from the native-born population, for example, by having a different rate of participation and working in different industries and occupations. To estimate the effect of migrant workers on a country's labour force and economy, it is important to distinguish between employees and self-employed and between resident and non-resident employers. The former distinction is common in labour-force statistics. Data that would allow distinguishing resident and non-resident employers are rarely collected and even when they are, the information is not published in statistics.

90. Administrative data on border crossings and visas and permits is the main source for measuring the flows of migrants and migrant workers. This source may be limited for countries that belong to areas with freedom of movement, such as the EU.

B. Recommendations

1. Main groups for measurement

91. Data collection should focus on identifying and characterizing three main groups:

(a) Stock of international migrants and migrant workers in the country – identified by country of birth and country of citizenship;

(b) Non-resident foreign workers and residents working abroad, clearly identifying separate categories based on the location of the employer;

(c) In-flow of migrants including for-work migrants to the country.

2. Variables

92. All groups may include regular and irregular migrants. The recommended variables are presented in Table 4.

Table 4
Variables recommended for data collection

Variable	*Comments*
Variables that identify migrants and non-resident foreign workers	
Country of birth	Possible answers may be: (a) list of all countries, (b) regionally relevant countries and "other", (c) country collecting data yes/no.
Country of citizenship	"Country" should be the country at time of data collection and not at time of birth, to account for changes in borders. Further aggregation is possible if necessary e.g. identifying foreigners as foreign-born with foreign-born parents.
Date of entry	Main aggregation by length of stay: less than 3 months; at least 3 and less than 12 months; 12 months and more. Other aggregations may be needed for analysis in other frameworks. Therefore it is important to collect date rather than length of stay. Intended length of stay may also be used as an indication of migrant status.
Purpose of stay	Legal purpose of stay from administrative sources or an answer to a survey question on the purpose of move. This information would allow identify for-work migrants as well as externally displaced persons.
Country of previous residence	For migrants.
Country of usual residence	For non-resident foreign workers.
Variables that relate to the labour force	
Labour-force status	Employed/ unemployed/ outside the labour force
Country of work	For residents working abroad. Possible answers may be: (a) list of all countries, (b) regionally relevant countries and "other".
Frequency or periodicity of commute	For example, daily/ monthly/ seasonally
Status in employment	ICSE-93
Industry	ISIC Rev.4
Occupation	ISCO-08
Education level	ISCED 2011

Variable	*Comments*
Variables that relate to the quality of employment	
Hours usually worked per week	LFS
Hours actually worked per week	LFS. Hours worked in the reference week of the survey
Hourly earnings	Can be used for the calculation of the pay gap e.g. between migrant and non-migrant or resident and non-resident workers (Indicator 1c1, UNECE 2015)
Exposure to physical health risk factors	Can be used for the calculation of the percentage of employed persons exposed to physical health risk factors (Indicator 1a3, (UNECE, 2015))
Exposure to mental health risk factors	Can be used for the calculation of the percentage of employed persons exposed to mental health risk factors (Indicator 1a4, (UNECE, 2015))
Variables that relate to employers	
Resident or non-resident employer	
Type of service supplied	EBOPS 2010
Relation between the employer and the client	Relevant for service suppliers. Intra-firm trade or not

3. Adjustment of surveys

93. A targeted survey or module can be a very useful source in understanding the patterns of international labour mobility. By measuring length and purpose of stay, labour-force status and other characteristics, they provide information on the different categories of migrants and non-migrants, including retrospective information on residents' employment abroad.

94. While it may not be possible to implement targeted surveys and modules frequently, providing data regularly on migrants and non-resident foreign workers and residents working abroad could be achieved by making the following changes to the Labour Force Survey (LFS):

(a) Broadening the investigation to persons who do not belong to the survey population to non-resident foreign workers regardless of length of stay and of whether the entity employing them is resident or non-resident. It is acknowledged that some countries may not be able to implement this recommendation because the LFS data collection is not designed to cover rare and difficult-to-access populations;

(b) Adding questions for those who work abroad on their country of work and on whether the entity that employs them is resident or non-resident;

(c) Changes in the survey plan to cover workplaces that serve as irregular residences;

(d) Adjusting interviewing technique by using face-to-face interviews instead of telephone interviews with households with migrants as household heads;

(e) Modifying sampling methodology to ensure that a sufficient number of migrants will be observed.

4. Integration of data from different sources

95. Use of administrative registers can supplement existing information sources and increase the value of the surveys already carried out. Countries should examine their administrative sources to see if they can supplement or replace some questions in LFS. For example, it may be possible to use social security data to identify whether an employer is resident or non-resident. The possibility to integrate data from other household surveys and border or passenger surveys should also be examined.

96. The integration of different kinds of data sources is a crucial step towards developing an effective system for the monitoring of migration. Many administrative sources contain information that can be used for statistics on migration and labour mobility. These include registers and databases on population, businesses, visas, passports, border control, residence and work permits, and asylum seekers and refugees. It is recommended to examine the potential of all these administrative sources and use them to the extent they are fit for purpose. This requires cooperation with relevant ministries, agencies and administrations responsible for the data.

5. Data exchange

97. Exchange of data between countries is encouraged in order to obtain a complete picture of labour mobility, particularly on non-resident foreign workers and residents working abroad. Without partner country data, it may be difficult or impossible to collect details on characteristics of incoming persons or trips. This implies that the data collection and quality of the compiling country depends on partners' willingness and capacity to collect and provide quality data, as this normally involves coordination, cost and in the case of international negotiations also certain interests, a central brokering institution may be important.

98. Compilers need to be cautious in using partner country data as definitions, laws and regulations may differ.

99. For measuring international mobility within areas with freedom of movement that do not require permits, such as the EU, data exchange among countries would be a particularly important source. A breakthrough could be achieved if the databases were shared between countries with a potential to link records at the individual level.

C. Future work

100. The full report describes how international labour mobility statistics could be improved through future work in statistics on establishments, social security, employment services, tourism, and undocumented migrants.

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